

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05

PC-01 OMB-01 DHA-02 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06

CCO-00 /073 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 535

INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L IYLAMASPD 2868

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652:E GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO CLAMPS DOWN

1. BHUTTO HAS DECIDED TO CRACK DOWN ON OPPOSITION FOLLOWING PNA'S LATEST REJECTION OF HIS OFFER OF A DIALOGUE. MOST MAJOR PNA LEADERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED, AND ORDERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN IN ALL FOUR PROVINCES TO SHOOT LOOTERS AND RIOTERS ON SIGHT.

2. LATEST STEPS ARE DIRECT RESULT OF PNA DECISION TO REJECT BHUTTO'S DIALOGUE OFFER. IN LATE AFTERNOON PRESS CONFERENCE MARCH 24, PNA SECRETARY GENERAL GHAFOOR AHMED RELEASED COPY OF REPLY TO PM FROM MUFTI MAHMUD. IN LETTER, PNA STATES THAT IF ITS DEMANDS FOR THE PM'S RESIGNATION, CONFIDENTIAL

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FORMATION OF A NEW ELECTION COMMISSION, AND HOLDING OF FRESH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS ARE MET, ONLY THEN WOULD THE PNA MEET WITH BHUTTO. THE PURPOSE OF SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE ONLY TO DISCUSS MODALITIES OF IGQLEMENTING PNA'S DEMANDS, NOT TO NEGOTIATE.

3. PM, IN FACE OF OPPOSITION INTRANSIGENCE, DECIDED TO PUT

THE LID ON THE PNA AND TAKE FIRM STEPS TO BRING PNA SPONSORED ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES TO AN END. HE CONSEQUENTLY CALLED MEETING IN PINDI OF ALL FOUR CHIEF MINISTERS AND INSTRUCTED THEM TO TIGHTEN UP THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THEIR PROVINCES. EACH CHIEF MINISTER RELEASED PRESS STATEMENT EARLY MARCH 25 STATING THAT ORDERS HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO "SHOOT ON SIGHT ANYONE COMMITTING VIOLENCE, ARSON, LOOTING, DAMAGING PRIVATE OR PUBLIC PROPERTY, OR ATTEMPTING TO DISTURB THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS." SIND CHIEF MINISTER'S STATEMENT ALSO NOTED THAT IN ADDITION TO POLICE AND FSF, THE ARMY HAS ORDERS TO CARRY OUT HIS DIRECTIONS. THIS IS FIRST PUBLIC ORDER BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL TO ARMY TO ENFORCE SECURITY SITUATION EVEN TO EXTENT OF SHOOTING RIOTERS.

4. IN FURTHER STEP TO MUZZLE OPPOSITION, THE FOLLOWING PNA LEADERS WERE ARRESTED DURING EARLY HOURS OF MARCH 25: MUFTI MAHMUD, PROFESSOR GHAFOOR AHMED, SHERBAZ MAZARI, SHAH AHMAD NOORANI, MALIK QASIM (MUSLIM LEAGUE LEADER) AND MOHAMMED TUFAIL (JAMAT-I-ISLAMI LEADER). BEGUM WALI KHAN IS REPORTEDLY UNDER HOUSE ARREST. CONGEN LAHORE ALSO REPORTS THAT THE PRESIDENT OF LAHORE HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION HAS BEEN PICKED UP AND THAT CRACKDOWN EXTENDS BEYOND ACTIVE POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS TO INCLUDE OTHER PROMINENT LAHORIS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED THE OPPOSITION.

5. DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROCESSIONS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY YESTERDAY. LATE THURSDAY AFTERNOON IN LAHORE A PROCESSION WAS BROKEN UP WHEN POLICE USED LATHI CHARGES AND TEAR GAS ON A CROWD OF TWO TO THREE HUNDRED. CONGEN LAHORE
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ALSO REPORTS THAT AN APPARENTLY SPONTANEOUS PNA MARCH WENT THROUGH THE RESIDENTIAL AREA OF GULBERG AT 2000 HOURS LAST NIGHT - THE FIRST TIME ANY PROCESSIONS WERE TAKEN OUT IN THE MORE PROSPEROUS RESIDENTIAL AREAS OF THE CITY. MEMBERS OF THE LAHORE HIGH COURT BAR ASSOCIATION HAD PROTEST MARCH ON THE MALL AT NOON TODAY WITH ABOUT 100 LAWYERS, UNDER HEAVY POLICE SURVEILLANCE, CARRYING PRO-OPPOSITION BANNERS.

6. THREE PNA PROCESSIONS ARE SCHEDULED FOR PINDI TODAY, AND BEGUM WALI KHAN AND BEGUM ASGHAR KHAN HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO LEAD WOMEN'S PROCESSION IN PESHAWAR. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS STILL SCHEDULED TO CONVENE TOMORROW MORNING, MARCH 26. MOST NA MEMBERS ARE ALREADY IN ISLAMABAD, ARRIVING EARLY TO AVOID ANY PNA ATTEMPTS TO DISRUPT NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS ON THE 26TH.

7. BHUTTO'S RESPONSE TO THE PNA'S REFUSAL TO TALK ENDS FOR THE MOMENT ANY HOPE OF A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION TO THE PRESENT IMPASSE. MOST OBSERVERS DID NOT EXPECT THE PNA TO

AGREE TO TALK WITH THE PM, SINCE THE OPPOSITION BELIEVES
IT HAS HIM ON THE DEFENSIVE AND ALSO PROBABLY FEARS HIS
ABILITY TO DIVIDE THE OPPOSITION IF IT DID SIT DOWN WITH
HIM. OUR ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE LINES HAVE NOW BEEN FIRMLY
DRAWN WITH THE OPPOSITION COMMITTED TO THE PM'S POLITICAL
DEMISE AND BHUTTO AS ARDENTLY DEDICATED TO THE RETENTION OF
POWER. MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THE CONFRONTATION WILL NOT BE
RESOLVED AROUND THE CONFERENCE TABLE OR THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS,
BUT RATHER THE OUTCOME WILL BE FINALLY DETERMINED BY RESULT
OF THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE IN THE STREETS FOR POPULAR
SUPPORT.
BYROADE

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